

GOETHE'S RELATION TO WOMEN.

BY THE EDITOR.

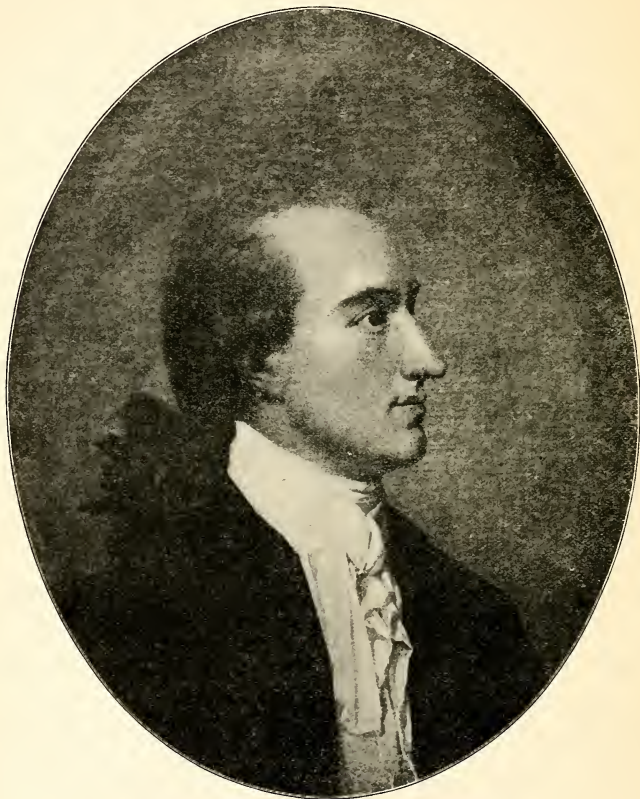
WHEN reading any biography of Goethe we are apt to receive a wrong impression of his personality. We become acquainted with a number of interesting people whom he meets in different places, and among them many attractive women. We are told of his literary labors and bear in mind his rapidly spreading fame. Thus his life seems to be a series of pleasures and triumphs while the quiet and concentrated work in which he was usually engaged is scarcely considered. His labors were almost playfully performed and his very recreations entered into them as part of his experiences which made him pause. His very sentiments are the material of his work, for, says he, "God made me say what in my heart I feel." Thus the seriousness of his life does not appear to a superficial observer, and yet those judge Goethe wrongly who would look upon his life as a mere series of flirtations, of lucky incidents and undeserved successes of all kinds. He himself relates his life in a charming style which renders every insignificant detail interesting, but all those pleasant events are drawn upon a somber background which the less noticed it is serves to render the more fascinating the figures that appear upon it.

Goethe's was a serious constitution, and the joyous events of his life are more incidental than the reader of "Truth and Fiction" might think. He was the butt of much envy and hostility in his lifetime, and above all his relations to women have been severely censured, but they were much purer and more innocent than is commonly assumed. We must remember that all the denunciations hurled against him by his critics are based upon his own story. There are no accusations coming from those whom he is assumed to have wronged.

* * *

When we wish to understand the part which women play in

Goethe's life we ought to speak first of all of the poet's relations with his mother. He knew very well what he owed to his father and what to his mother, tersely and poetically expressed in the lines:



GOETHE IN HIS THIRTIETH YEAR.

Painted by G. O. May, 1779.

"From father my inheritance
Is stature and conduct steady.
From mother I have my love of romance
And a tongue that's ever ready."

Goethe owed to his mother his poetic genius, his talent for story telling, and his buoyancy of spirit.

Frau Aja, as Goethe's mother was called by her son, was much younger than her husband, and we know that their marriage was not a love match. She was only seventeen and a half years old when on August 1748 she joined her life to that of the Counselor



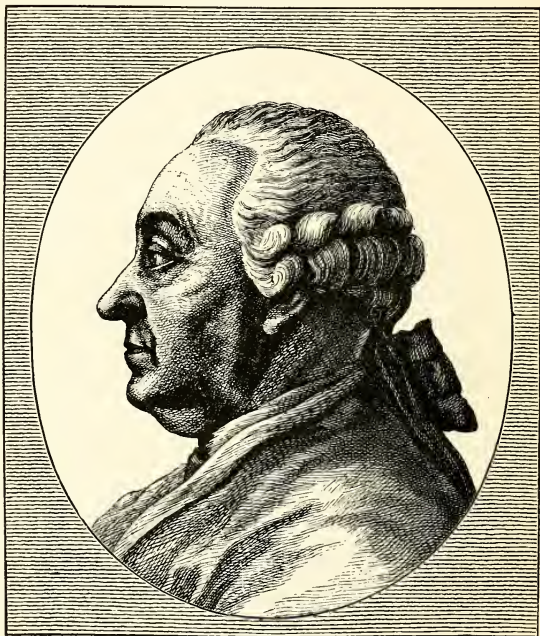
GOETHE'S MOTHER, CALLED FRAU RATH, OR FRAU AJA.

After a picture in the possession of Solomon Hirzel. Original portraits of the Frau Rath are very rare.

Johann Caspar Goethe who was her senior by nineteen years. The warmth of the young wife's heart did not find the response she sought in the care of her sober and paternal mate, and so she lavished upon her son all the sentiment and fervor of which her soul was capable. Of six children she lost four¹ in early childhood, and

¹ Hermann Jacob, born in November, 1752, died in January, 1759; Catharina Elisabeth, born in September, 1754, died in December, 1755; Johanna Maria, born in March, 1757, died in August, 1759; and Georg Adolf, born in June, 1760, died in February, 1761.

only two, Wolfgang and Cornelia, survived. These sad bereavements only served to intensify her love for her two remaining children. Others might have succumbed to the gloom of melancholy, or their disposition would have soured, not so Frau Aja. With all the tenderness of a young woman's affection she clung to her children,



GOETHE'S FATHER.

After a copper engraving in Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente* (1777). The explanatory text reads: "Here is a pretty good likeness of the excellent, skilful, order-loving, discreet and clever executive man, who, however, made no pretense to a spark of poetic genius,—the father of the great man."

especially to her spritely boy, and she not only shared his joys when a child but also the unreserved confidence of the youth and the man. With him she renewed her girlhood days more as her son's companion in his sometimes giddy pranks than as his educator and parent. "My Wolfgang and I," she used to say, "always clung close together, because we were young together."



THE GOETHE FAMILY OF FRANKFORT.*

It was painted in 1762 by the Darmstadt artist J. C. Seekatz for 60 gulden.

* After the death of Goethe's mother this picture came into the possession of Bettina von Arnim who left it to her son-in-law, Hermann Grimm. Goethe kept two of the artist's sketches of this picture in his collection. It is one of these which is here reproduced. The oil painting differs slightly.

Frau Aja surrounded her son with her motherly love, removing from his life even in later years everything that could worry him or cause him solicitude. For instance it is not commonly known how



THE ROOM OF FRAU RATH GOETHE.

After a drawing by E. Buchner.

much she did for him in pecuniary sacrifices at the time when her illustrious son was well able to take care of his own accounts. During the Napoleonic war Frankfort had to pay a heavy contribution,

and Goethe, owning some property there though not being a citizen of the free city, was directly affected. His mother paid every penny of his share without ever referring to her son, simply to spare him the worry of making these increased payments. There is preserved in Weimar, a little sheet containing a few figures in Frau Aja's own handwriting which tell us how much the poet's mother still cared for the comfort of her son, and continued to spoil him with her motherly love. They read as follows:

1778.	700
1782.	888
1782.	1000
1785.	1000
1794.	1000
1801.	1000
<hr/>	
	f. 5588
	600
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	f. 6188

The sum of 6188 florins is more than twenty-five hundred dollars.

* * *

It is true that Goethe's poetic nature needed the stimulation of a woman's interest, but his relations to his women friends were not frivolous. He was not unprincipled, but he dreaded the indissoluble bond of marriage, and he carefully avoided giving any woman just cause to make a claim on his constancy. He himself expressed this sentiment in a humorous poem entitled *Vorschlag zur Güte* which might be translated simply "Proposal" or "For Consideration." It reads in an English translation thus:

He:

"So well thou pleasest me, my dear,
That as we are together here
I'd never like to part;
'Twould suit us both, sweet heart."

She:

"As I please you, so you please me,
Our love is mutual you see.
Let's marry, and change rings,
Nor worry about other things."

He:

"We marry! The word makes me feel blue,
I feel at once like leaving you."

She:

"Why hesitate? For then of course
If it won't work, we'll try divorce."

Being fearful that he might marry some one who would become a hindrance to him in his poetic work, Goethe was careful not to be carried away by passion, and he expresses this principle in another poem entitled *Wahrer Genuss*, i. e., "True Enjoyment," where he says:

"And shall thee tie no holy bondage,
Oh youth, practice control of thee.
Thus mayest thou preserve thy freedom,
Nor yet without attachment be."

We have reason to believe that Goethe's relations with women were dominated by this maxim, and in more advanced years when his fame had made him more attractive he fortified himself against temptations and all advances made by the fair sex, in the following rhyme:

"Only this time be not caught as yet,
And a hundred times you escape the net."

* * *

Goethe's first love was of a very harmless character. It was in the year 1764 when he was a mere boy of fifteen, and his adored one, Gretchen, was a few years his senior, probably seventeen or eighteen years old,—a good-natured girl whom the vicissitudes of life had rendered both modest and pensive, so as to impress the bold stripling with the dignity of a pure soul. For instance once when she had rebuked him for entering into the silly jokes of his friends he was so infatuated with the lovely girl that he wanted to embrace her, but she stood aloof. "Don't kiss me," said she, "that is vulgar; but love me if you can."

Gretchen seems to have been an orphan, presumably the daughter of an inn-keeper at Offenbach, and was brought up in the house of relatives. Her family name is not known. The young Goethe became acquainted at her home with a man whom he recommended to his father for a position, and when the youth's protégé turned out to be a scoundrel, an investigation ensued in which Gretchen spoke of the young Wolfgang as a "boy," which offended him greatly. The following comment in "Truth and Fiction" describes Goethe's sentiments at the disillusionment of his first affection. Having related the result of the investigation as told by his tutor, he continues:

"At last I could contain myself no longer, and asked what had become of Gretchen, for whom I, once for all, confessed the strongest attachment. My friend shook his head and smiled. 'Set your mind at rest,' replied he, 'that girl has passed her examination very well, and has borne honorable testimony to that effect. They could discover nothing in her but what was good and amiable. She even won the favor of those who questioned her, and who could not refuse to grant her desire to remove from the city. Even what she has confessed regarding you, my friend, does her honor. I have read her deposition in the secret reports myself, and have seen her signature.'—'That signature!' exclaimed I, 'which makes me so happy and so miserable. What has she confessed, then? What has she signed?' My friend hesitated to reply, but the cheerfulness of his face showed me that he concealed nothing dangerous. 'If you must know, then,' replied he at last, 'when she was asked about you, and her intercourse with you, she said quite frankly, "I cannot deny that I have seen him often and with pleasure; but I have always treated him as a child, and my affection for him was truly that of a sister. In many cases I have given him good advice and, instead of instigating him to any equivocal action, I have hindered him from taking part in wanton tricks, which might have brought him into trouble."' "

"My friend still went on making Gretchen speak like a governess; but for some time I had ceased to listen to him. I was terribly affronted that she had set me down in the reports as a child, and I at once believed myself cured of all passion for her. I even hastily assured my friend that all was now over. I also spoke no more of her, named her no more; but I could not leave off the bad habit of thinking about her, and of recalling her face, her air, her demeanor, though now, to be sure, all appeared to me in quite another light. I felt it intolerable that a girl, at the most only a couple of years older than I, should regard me as a child: while I had imagined that I passed with her for a very sensible and clever youth."

A reminiscence of Gretchen is preserved in Goethe's *Faust* in so far as the heroine bears her name.

* * *

Goethe's relation to his sister might well serve all brothers as a model. We cannot characterize her better than in his own words:

"She was tall, well and delicately formed, and had something naturally dignified in her demeanor, which melted away into pleasing mildness. The lineaments of her face, neither striking nor

beautiful, indicated a character which was not, nor ever could be, in union with itself. Her eyes were not the finest I have ever seen, but the deepest, behind which you expected the most; and when



GRETCHEN.

By Kaulbach.

they expressed any affection, any love, their brilliancy was unequalled. And yet, properly speaking, this expression was not tender, like that which comes from the heart carrying with it at the

same time something of longing and desire. This expression came from the soul; it was full and rich and seemed as if it would only give without needing to receive.

"But what disfigured her face in a peculiar manner so that she would often appear positively ugly, was the fashion of those times, which not only bared the forehead, but, either accidentally or on purpose, did everything apparently or really to enlarge it. Now, as she had the most feminine, most perfect arched forehead, and, moreover, a pair of strong black eyebrows and prominent eyes, these circumstances occasioned a contrast, which, if it did not repel



THE POET'S SISTER.

Drawn by Goethe, presumably in 1770. From the portfolio *Juvenilia*.

every stranger at the first glance, at least did not attract him. She felt it at an early age; and this feeling became constantly the more painful to her, the farther she advanced into the years when both sexes find an innocent pleasure in being mutually agreeable.

"To nobody can his own form be repugnant. The ugliest, as well as the most beautiful, has a right to enjoy his own presence; and as favor beautifies, and every one regards himself in the looking glass with favor, it may be asserted that every one must see himself with complacency, even if he would struggle against the feeling. Yet my sister had such a decided foundation of good sense, that she

could not possibly be blind or silly in this respect. On the contrary she perhaps knew more clearly than she ought, that she stood far behind her female playfellows in external beauty, without feeling

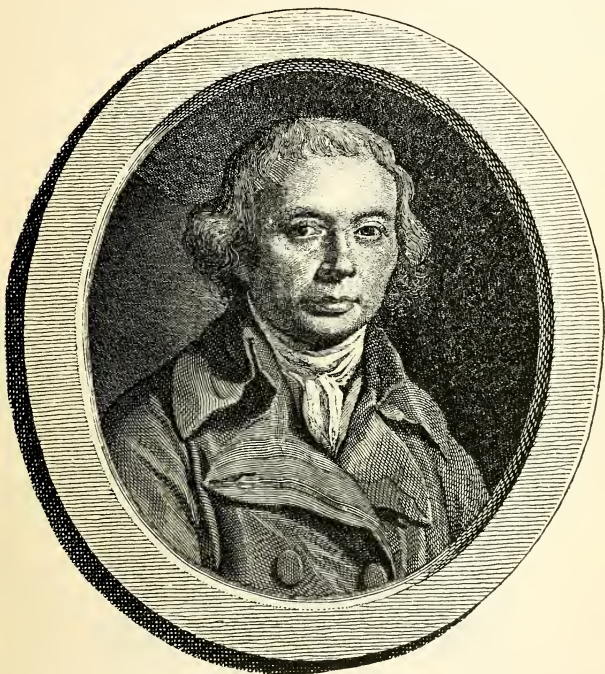


CORNELIA, GOETHE'S SISTER.

consoled by the fact that she infinitely surpassed them in internal advantages.

"If a woman can find compensation for the want of beauty, she

richly found it in the unbounded confidence, the regard and love, which all her female friends bore to her; whether they were older or younger, all cherished the same sentiments. A very pleasant society had collected around her. Young men were not wanting who knew how to insinuate themselves into it and nearly every girl found



JOHANN GEORG SCHLOSSER.*

Goethe's brother-in-law. After a medallion by Becker.

an admirer; she alone had remained without a partner. While, indeed, her exterior was in some measure repulsive, the mind that gleamed through it was also more repelling than attractive; for the presence of dignity puts a restraint upon others. She felt this sen-

* Born 1739 at Frankfort. He was a lawyer who served as private secretary to the Duke of Württemberg. In 1773 he accepted a position as a state counselor of Baden at Carlsruhe, and after an appointment as Oberamtmann at Emmendingen, he returned to Carlsruhe in 1787 as director of the ducal court and retired in 1794. He died at Frankfort in 1799.

sibly ; she made no attempt to conceal it from me, and her love was directed to me with so much greater force. The case was singular enough. As confidants to whom one reveals a love-affair actually by genuine sympathy become lovers also, nay, grow into rivals, and at last, perchance, transfer the passion to themselves, so it was with us two. For, when my connection with Gretchen was torn asunder, my sister consoled me the more earnestly, because she secretly felt the satisfaction of having got rid of a rival ; and I,



CHARITAS MEIXNER.

After an oil painting.

too, could not but feel a quiet, half-mischievous pleasure, when she did me the justice to assure me that I was the only one who truly loved, understood, and esteemed her."

In November, 1773, Cornelia was married to Schlosser, and the newly married couple left for Strassburg. Her marriage was not fortunate and she sought refuge in her brother's friendship, but he could offer no help. She died prematurely in Emmendingen in 1777.

One of Cornelia's friends was Charitas Meixner, a young girl born in 1750 at Worms. While Goethe studied in Leipsic he devoted some passing attention to her, as appears from his correspondence with her cousin, a young Mr. Trap. We know too little about her to form an adequate idea of her character and the influence she might have had on the young poet. She afterwards married a merchant of Worms by the name of Schuler, and died at the age of twenty-seven years.

* * *

At Frankfort Cornelia was visited by some friends who played a part in her brother's life. They were Frau Betty Jacobi, the wife of Fritz Jacobi, and Johanna Fahlmer, a younger sister of Fritz



BETTY JACOBI, NÉE VON CLERMONT. JOHANNA FAHLMER IN OLD AGE.

Jacobi's mother, with her niece, Fritz Jacobi's half-sister Lolo. Fräulein Fahlmer was a daughter of her father's second wife and considerably younger than her nephews. Being Jacobi's aunt she was called "Auntie" (*Tantchen*) even as a young girl, and in Goethe's letters she always figured as Auntie Fahlmer. These three young women contributed not a little to cement a friendship between Goethe and Fritz Jacobi which in spite of profound difference of religious conviction lasted to the end of their lives. The maiden name of Helene Elisabeth Jacobi (called Betty) was Von Clermont. She was born October 5, 1743, and died prematurely on February 9, 1784. She was of Dutch nationality and was married in 1764 to Fritz Jacobi. Her visit to Frankfort falls in the year 1773. Goethe was very fond of her and describes her in "Truth and Fiction" as

genuinely Dutch in her appearance, "without a trace of sentimentality in her feeling, true, cheerful in speech, a splendid Dutch woman, who without any trace of sensuality reminds one of the plump type of Rubens's women."

Auntie Fahlmer was born June 16, 1744, at Düsseldorf and died October 31, 1821, in her native city. She visited Frankfort during the summer of 1772 and the spring of 1774. She was a friend of both Wolfgang and Cornelia Goethe and became more



KITTY SCHÖNKOPF.

and more attached to the latter after her marriage and during the years 1773-1777 she carried on a lively correspondence with Goethe. Somewhat more than a year after Cornelia's death, June 8, 1777, she became the wife of the widower Johann Georg Schlosser. The only procurable picture of her is a portrait made at an advanced age.

* * *

Kitty Schönkopf, the "Aennchen" of Goethe's autobiography,

was a pretty and attractive girl, but being the daughter of the proprietor of a restaurant where Goethe took his dinners during the summer of 1766, she was not of a distinguished family. Their courtship was much disturbed by jealousy and whims which finally led to a rupture. The main cause of the trouble seems to have been the restless character of the young poet who felt that his interest would not be lasting, and who was almost afraid to tie himself to her forever by marriage. Kitty was married in 1770 to Dr. Karl Kanne, later vice-mayor of Leipsic.

This flirtation at Leipsic (in 1766) with "Aennchen" was of a transient nature and did not leave a deep impression on the poet's heart. So we may regard his romance with Friederike Brion of Sesenheim as the first true love affair of his life.

At Strassburg Goethe had taken dancing lessons at the house of a French dancing master, whose two daughters were in love with the young poet, and one day the older one, jealous of her sister, kissed him and solemnly cursed the woman who would be the first to kiss him again. The scene is dramatically told in Goethe's autobiography, and the unhappy victim of this curse was to be Friederike.

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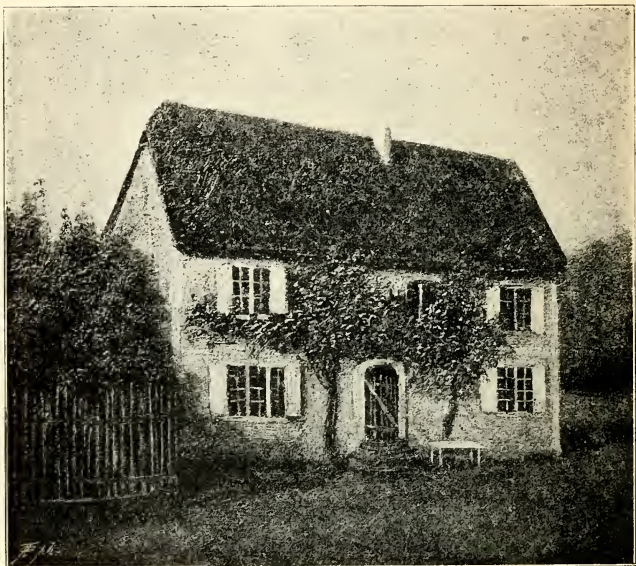
A student by the name of Wieland introduced Goethe to the Brion family. The father, a Huguenot of French extraction, was a Protestant clergyman at Sesenheim, a village about twenty miles from Strassburg. He had six children; one of his daughters was married while the two youngest lived at home. The name of the elder of these two was Maria Salome, and Friederike, the youngest daughter of the Brion family (born April 19, 1752), was just nineteen years of age, with blue questioning eyes and a most alluring smile, not exactly beautiful but very pretty, and unusually responsive. No wonder that the young poet's heart was at once aflame. The time was spent in lively conversation on Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* and other literary topics, in moonlight promenades, dances and rural frolics, until Goethe was so thrilled with youth and love that forgetful of the French damsel's curse he yielded to the temptation and pressed a kiss upon her yielding lips.

Can we doubt that the lines of his poem "To the Moon" have reference to Friederike's love when he says:

"Once that prize did I possess
Which I yearn for yet,
And alas! to my distress,
Never can forget."—Tr. by P. C.

[Ich besass es doch einmal,
Was so köstlich ist!
Dass man doch zu seiner Qual
Nimmer es vergisst!]

No wonder that Goethe never forgot this idyllic courtship and that the remembrance of it seemed to gain in power with his advancing age. George Henry Lewes, on his visit to Weimar met some persons then living who had known the great poet personally. He says with reference to Friederike: "The secretary to whom this episode was dictated, told me how much affected Goethe seemed to be as these scenes revisited his memory. Walking up and down the



FRIEDERIKE'S HOME, THE PARSONAGE AT SESENHEIM.

After an oil painting formerly in the possession of A. Störber, now in the Freie Deutsche Hochstift at Frankfort on the Main.

room, with his hands behind him, he often stopped his walk, and paused in the dictation; then after a long silence, followed by a deep sigh, he continued the narrative in a lower tone."

It is to be regretted that we have no portrait of Friederike which can be considered as unequivocally authentic. Among the papers of the poet Lenz, however, a pencil drawing has been found which represents a youthful girl in Alsacian costume who may very probably be this much wooed daughter of the Sesenheim parson. There



KAULBACH'S BRION FAMILY.

Friederike is reading *The Vicar of Wakefield*, to the characters of which story Goethe compared the inmates of the Sesenheim parsonage.

is a great probability that such is the case but we have no positive evidence. The handwriting of Friederike, however, is still pre-

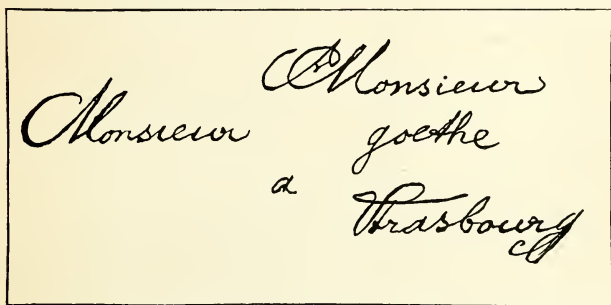


FALK'S FRIEDERIKE PORTRAIT.

Found among Lenz's papers.

served, and we reproduce here one of the best known specimens of it from an envelope addressed to Goethe.

There are many readers of Goethe's autobiography who become so charmed with the loveliness of Friederike that they cannot forgive the poet for not having married her. Some have gone so far as to attack him most violently and censure him for a breach of faith. They forget that their accusations are based on evidence furnished exclusively by the accused person himself. That Goethe had never a harsh word for her certainly does not speak against him, and we must assume that there were weighty reasons which led to a rupture. In fact he accuses himself, not at all considering himself blameless although he felt that he could not have acted differently. We will quote the most important passage on the subject from his autobiography. When he wrote her that he would have to leave she answered in a most touching way. Goethe says:



Monsieur a Monsieur
Goethe
Strasbourg

FRIEDERIKE'S AUTOGRAPH.

"Friederike's answer to my farewell letter rent my heart. It was the same hand, the same tone of thought, the same feeling which was formed for me and by me. I now for the first time felt the loss which she suffered, and saw no means to supply it or even alleviate it. I was always conscious that I missed her; and, what was worst of all, I could not forgive myself for my own misfortune. Gretchen had been taken away from me; Annette had left me; now, for the first time, I was the guilty one. I had wounded her lovely heart to its very depths; and the period of a gloomy repentance, with the absence of the refreshing love to which I had grown accustomed, was most agonizing, nay, intolerable."

Further on Goethe continues:

"At the time when I was pained by my grief at Friederike's situation, I again sought aid from poetry after my old fashion.

I again continued my wonted poetical confession in order that by this self-tormenting penance I might be worthy absolution in my own eyes. The two Marias in 'Götz von Berlichingen' and 'Clavigo,' and the two bad characters who act the parts of their lovers, may have been the results of such penitent reflections."

When Goethe speaks of first love as the only true love he apparently has reference to his love for Friederike, not to his prior and more boyish flirtations with Gretchen and Annette Schönkopf; and this explains why he cherished this episode of his life with such tenderness. Goethe says:

"The first love, it is rightly said, is the only one; for in the second, and by the second, the highest sense of love is already lost. The conception of the eternal and infinite which elevates and supports it is destroyed; and it appears transient like everything else that recurs."

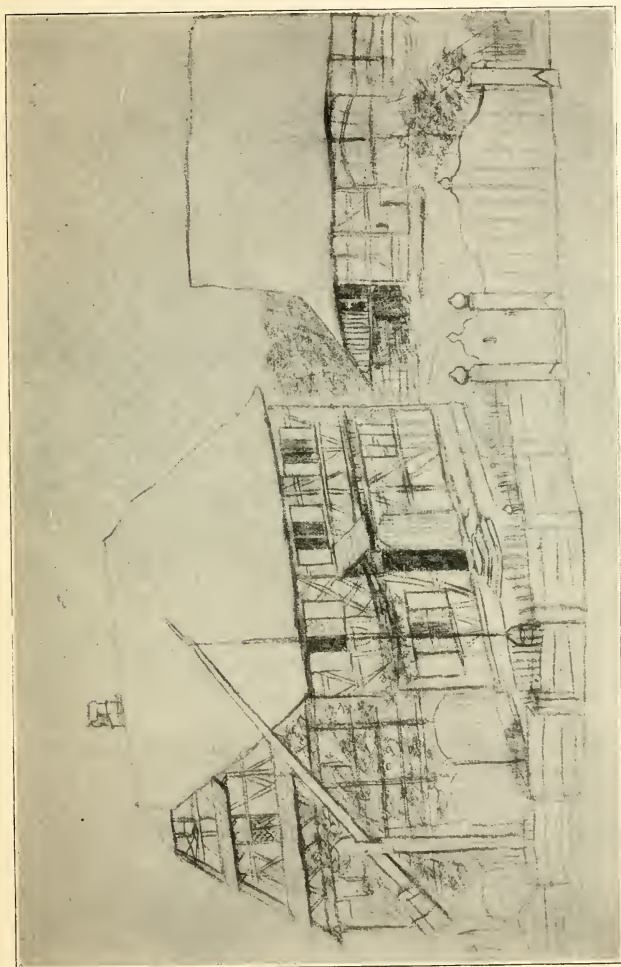
The correspondence between Goethe and Friederike has been destroyed, which fact proves that both parties shunned publicity. However, Goethe remembered Friederike's love, and set up for her an everlasting monument in the story of his Sesenheim romance, while ever afterward he carefully endeavored to crowd out from his mind all memories that would disfigure these recollections so dear to him. In Goethe's autobiography Friederike appears of such natural and lovely charm that her personality remained one of the favorite women characters of German literature. She died April 3, 1813, at the house of her sister, Frau Pfarrer Marx at Meissenheim, and on her tombstone two simple lines are inscribed:

"Ein Strahl der Dichtersonne fiel auf sie,
So hell dass er Unsterblichkeit ihr lieh."

[Upon her fell a ray of poesy,
So bright that she gained immortality.]

Goethe's description of Friederike has made Sesenheim a place of pilgrimage to lovers of German literature, and the first distinguished visitor of the old Brion parsonage was the poet Ludwig Tieck in the summer of 1822, but he expressed his disappointment by saying that in a certain sense he "repented having visited Sesenheim." He adds, "'repented' is not the word, but an unpoetic sadness fills me to find that everything there is so different from the picture my imagination formed according to the incomparable description of our poet."

In the autumn of the same year (1822) Professor Naeke, of Bonn, visited Sesenheim and was greatly disillusioned at the report



THE PARSONAGE AT SEENHEIM.

After a drawing by Goethe. In the original, the words "Brion Piarrer" can still be read on the left gate post.

of Pastor Schweppenhäuser, the successor of Friederike's father in that rural parsonage. The real Friederike was somewhat different from the poetical figure of Goethe's autobiography. Naeke wrote down his impressions under the title of "A Pilgrimage to Sesenheim," and having stated the result of his investigations concludes his report with an expression of satisfaction that she had no reason to reproach Goethe for her misfortunes. Naeke's "Pilgrimage to Sesenheim" remained unprinted until 1840, when it was published by Varnhagen von Ense, but a copy of the manuscript had been sent to Goethe at the time, and he made the following comment which appears to be all he ever cared to say on the subject:²



SESENHEIM.

"In order to give brief expression to my thoughts about the news from Sesenheim I shall make use of a symbol of general physics derived more particularly, however, from entoptics; I shall speak here of repeated reflections of light.

"1. A youthful blessed delusion (*Wahnleben*) unconsciously reflects itself forcibly in the young man.

"2. The image long cherished, and probably revived, surges ever to and fro, gracious and lovely, before his inner vision for many years.

"3. Tenderly received in early years and long retained, finally in vivid remembrance it is given external expression and is once more reflected.

²This short article is inscribed *Wiederholte Spiegelungen* (i. e., "repeated or continued mirrorings"), and is registered under that title in the index of any edition of Goethe's complete works. It was published first in his posthumous works 1833, Vol. IX, and is contained in his complete works as No. 117 in the volume entitled *Aufsätze zur Literatur*.

"4. This image radiates in all directions into the world, and a fine, noble heart may be charmed by this appearance as if it were the reality, and receives from it a deep impression.

"5. From this is developed an inclination to actualize all that may still be conjured up out of the past.

"6. The longing grows, and that it may be gratified it becomes indispensably necessary to return once more to the spot in order to make his own the vicinity at least.

"7. Here by happy chance is found on the commemorated spot a sympathetic and well-informed man upon whom the image has likewise been impressed.

"8. Now in the locality which had been in some respects desolated, it becomes possible to restore a true image, to construct a second presence from the wrecks of truth and tradition, and to love Friederike in her entire loveliness of yore.

"9. Thus in spite of all earthly intervention she can again be once more reflected in the soul of her old lover, and charmingly revive in him a pure, noble and living presence.

"When we consider that repeated moral mirrorings not only vividly revive the past but even ascend to a higher life, then we think of the entoptic phenomena which likewise do not fade from mirror to mirror but are kindled all the more. Thus we shall obtain a symbol of what has often been repeated in the history of the arts and sciences, of the church and even of the political world, and is still repeated every day.

"January 31, 1823."

We can now understand the lines in Goethe's ode "To the Moon," when the poet sighs:

"Flow along, dear river, flow;
Joy for aye is sped.
Glee and kisses even so,
Yea, and troth have fled."

[Fliesse, fliesse, lieber Fluss;
Nimmer werd ich froh.
So verrauchte Scherz und Kuss,
Und die Treue so.]

Historical investigations have led to a bitter discussion, the extremes of which are represented on the one side by I. Froitzheim,³ on the other by Düntzer, Erich Schmidt, Bielowski, etc. Although an idealist would be naturally inclined to take Düntzer's view of the case, we can not ignore Goethe's own statements which, though very guardedly, concede the reliability of Naeke's information. We

³ In protest against the exaggerated glorification of Friederike by certain hero-worshippers, Dr. I. Froitzheim followed up the scent of Professor Naeke and published the result of his investigations under the title, *Friederike von Sessenheim nach geschichtlichen Quellen* (Gotha, F. A. Perthes, 1893).



GOETHE PARTING FROM FRIEDERIKE.
By Eugen Klimesch.

know further that Friederike was engaged for some time to Jacob Michael Reinhold Lenz, one of the minor German poets and a personal friend of Goethe, but that he too found cause to break off the engagement.

It is impossible to deny the pertinence of these and other facts, but on the other hand we need not (as does Froitzheim) begrudge to Friederike the honor of the inscription of her tombstone. Friederike was human, perhaps too human, but her foible was the same as Goethe's. The suffering she endured for her fault was sufficient atonement. We must remember that even the severest critics of her character grant that she was full of grace and loveliness, not a striking beauty but of rare charm, capable of intense devotion, charitable, self-sacrificing and thirsting for love. Even when her youth was gone she could fascinate men of talent and set their hearts aflame with passion. There is no need to require her to be a saint, and we might as well repeat of her the words of Christ, "Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much."

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]